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## **Domestic textiles and county house sales in Georgian England**

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## **Abstract**

Textiles are central to our understanding of the second-hand trade in Georgian England, but the focus is generally on clothing; much less attention has been given to domestic textiles in the form of linen, beds and drapery. This paper draws on auction catalogues from Northamptonshire, 1761-1836, to identify: the changing quantity and nature of textiles being sold; the ways in which they were promoted and valorised, and what this might tell us about consumers' motivations. It highlights how the continued appeal of second-hand textiles was framed in a rhetoric of gentility and respectability, and reveals the country house auction as a key institution in the re-circulation of second-hand goods.

## **Key words**

Second-hand, auctions, country houses, consumer motivations, textiles

## Domestic textiles and county house sales in Georgian England

‘A CATALOGUE of the Entire Genuine Household Furniture of Thomas Medlycott, Esq; deceased. Consisting of Variety of Beds, with silks, Damask, Tabby, Harrateen, and other Furniture; Cabinet Work in Mahogany and Walnut Tree ... Marble Tables, Chimney, Pier, and Sconce Glasses; Pictures, Plate, Linen, useful and ornamental China; Kitchen Furniture and Brewing Utensils; a Post Chaise and Harness; a large quantity of Port and other Wines; Likewise an elegant Collection of Books ... which will be sold by AUCTION (By Order of the Executors) At his late Dwelling-House in Cottingham, in the County of Northampton’.<sup>1</sup>

Thus ran the front cover of a catalogue for an auction taking place at a small country house in 1761. It speaks of the material richness of the English gentry – a wealth of goods that had grown and spread through most social groups during seventeenth and especially eighteenth-century Europe. This involved the growing supply of goods, especially semi-luxuries, which made homes increasingly comfortable and certainly much fuller.<sup>2</sup> Whilst much attention has focused on the role of imported goods and the imitations that they spawned,<sup>3</sup> the second-hand trade played an important part in supplying household goods to all sections of society through the eighteenth century and beyond.

The consumption of second-hand goods has received growing interest in recent years, yet remains surprisingly marginal to broader narratives of consumer change that still focus on luxury, novelty and fashion as the key drivers of change.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, these are also seen as key

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<sup>1</sup> Northamptonshire Central Library (NCL), M0005644NL/2 Cottingham, 1761, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*; Ago, *Gusto for Things*; Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*; DeJean, *Age of Comfort*.

<sup>3</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, 46-110.

<sup>4</sup> Recent collections on second-hand include Fontaine, *Alternative Exchanges*; Stobart and Van Damme, *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*; Fennetaux, Junqua and Vasset, *Afterlife of Used Things*. In contrast,

drivers in the provision and consumption of use goods.<sup>5</sup> Focusing especially on clothing, Lemire has recently posited a three-stage model of the changing character of the second-hand trade.<sup>6</sup> In the first stage – the transition from scarcity – all sections of society were engaged, goods being used as non-monetary exchange by rich and poor alike, in part due to the lack of small coinage and the moral imperative of thrift, but also because of the absolute scarcity of goods.<sup>7</sup> By the later seventeenth century, there was a growing abundance of goods on the market and in the home, which marked stage two of Lemire's model. This encouraged a growth in second-hand exchange as used goods were released onto the market, but also a bifurcation of that market: the poor continued to draw heavily on second-hand goods, especially clothing, whilst the wealthy largely withdrew as buyers, other than of collectibles such as books or art.<sup>8</sup> However, they still pump unwanted items onto the market: unfashionable clothing and furniture, for example, which was acquired by labourers and artisans in a trickle down of goods and tastes.<sup>9</sup> This division was heightened further in the third stage, industrial plenty, although by the second quarter of the nineteenth century certain categories of second-hand goods were increasingly attractive as curios and antiques, old things being valued by elites and others for their scarcity and their seeming authenticity.<sup>10</sup>

This very brief sketch of the changing second-hand trade opens up two key points. One is the meaning that second-hand goods held for their new owners; the other is the ways in which these objects were promoted and marketed to potential buyers. Goods carry many different meanings, but these have often been conceived as a binary of economic and cultural value, with the latter

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second-hand is absent from Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, and marginal in de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, and Trentmann, *Empire of Things*.

<sup>5</sup> for example, Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion'.

<sup>6</sup> Lemire, 'Secondhand clothing trade'.

<sup>7</sup> On thrift, see: Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, esp. 174-7; Berg, 'New commodities,' 63-85; Rasmussen, 'Recycling a fashionable wardrobe', 193-222. On goods as currency, see: Fontaine, 'Exchange of second-hand goods'; Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion'; Ago, *Gusto for Things*, 18-26.

<sup>8</sup> Lemire, 'Secondhand clothing trade', 153.

<sup>9</sup> On furniture, see Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion'; Charpy, 'Auction house'.

<sup>10</sup> Van Damme, 'Second-hand dealing'; Charpy, 'Auction house'; Westgarth, *Antique and Curiosity Dealer*.

becoming increasingly important through the transformation of consumption in the long eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Whilst conceptually distinct, these different meanings or values overlapped in particular objects. As Riello notes, a bed might be redolent with social and cultural associations, yet it remained an economic asset with a monetary value that could be realised.<sup>12</sup> This dual meaning is apparent from the care with which testators itemised specific belongings as bequests: they were desirable for their economic value and their emotional resonance.<sup>13</sup> It is all the more surprising, therefore, that engagement with second-hand consumption is persistently linked most directly to financial necessity, be it the purchase of old clothes by the urban poor described by Lemire or the bartering of unwanted furniture by cash-strapped French aristocrats detailed by Coquery and Charpy.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as all these authors make clear, used goods could be valued for their cultural meanings: the second-hand beau and the use of old furniture as a means to express difference or invent/augment pedigree. This links to the insights offered by studies of contemporary second-hand consumption. Gregson and Crewe acknowledge the importance of financial necessity to some of those buying second-hand goods, but argue that consumers might also be driven by other motivations.<sup>15</sup> One possibility is that they might be engaged in attempts to capture value or get a bargain, acquiring higher value or better quality goods for less money. Buying second-hand thus becomes 'clever' consumption. Another motivation is the desire to 'capture difference'. Here, consumption links closely with social identity and the role of goods in marking the taste, judgement and individuality of the consumer becomes critical. For Gregson and Crewe, this involved developments such as retro-shops; for those studying the eighteenth century, it has been recognised in what Stewart terms 'the search for the authentic object' or the desire to 'share in another's "genuine" world' as Wall puts it.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ago, *Gusto for Things*, 15-39; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, 8-13.

<sup>12</sup> Riello, 'Fabricating the domestic', 49-51.

<sup>13</sup> Ago, *Gusto for Things*, 26-30, 58-9; Berg, 'Women's property'.

<sup>14</sup> Lemire, 'Second-hand beau'; Lemire, 'Secondhand clothing trade'; Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion'; Charpy, 'Auction house'.

<sup>15</sup> Gregson and Crewe, *Second Hand Cultures*, 11-12

<sup>16</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 133; Wall, 'English auction', 14-15.

If second-hand goods were sought after for varied reasons, it follows that they would be actively marketed in ways that addressed these different motivations, especially as the supply of goods grew from the later seventeenth century; indeed, knowledge of goods – their availability, quality, etc. – was important in structuring demand. Some knowledge was tacit and experiential, as Lemire makes clear in the context of textiles, but much was learned from visiting shops and auctions or by perusing advertisements in the printed media, including newspapers and pattern books.<sup>17</sup> Auctions were especially important in this regard because the goods were available for inspection; the catalogues described real objects rather than designs. The ways in which goods were described is therefore particularly useful in linking objects to different systems of meaning: value, taste, gentility and utility. They could affect the attractiveness of goods (and ultimately their price) by communicating messages about quality of raw materials, product design, and so on.<sup>18</sup>

In this paper, I want to explore some of the ways in which meaning, motivation and marketing came together in the catalogues of 21 country house auctions that took place in Northamptonshire between 1761 and 1736 – a period in which new and used goods were increasingly plentiful and immediately before the emergence of a strong and specialist antiques trade. Northamptonshire was an essentially rural county with many gentry families, including Thomas Medlycott, and a few larger magnates such as the Earl of Halifax, whose possessions were auctioned a decade after the sale at Cottingham. The sample thus contains a cross section of the landowning elite of Georgian England. Auctions were well established as a mechanism for clearing the possessions of the deceased or bankrupt, or for cash-strapped landowners to realise assets.<sup>19</sup> They were institutions which bound together buyers and sellers, and embedded transactions in a familiar and structured set of practices which encouraged trust.<sup>20</sup> Rather than focus on the auctions as events – something which Nenadic and Pennell have both done in the

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<sup>17</sup> Lemire, 'Secondhand clothing trade', 148; Coquery, 'Language of success', 73-7; Wall, 'English auctions'.

<sup>18</sup> See Jeggle, 'Labeling with numbers', 36.

<sup>19</sup> Ohashi, 'Auction duty act', 21-31; MacArthur and Stobart, 'Going for a song'; Gemmett, 'Fonthill sale'.

<sup>20</sup> See De Munck and Lyna, 'Locating and dislocating value', 4.

past<sup>21</sup> – I am interested in what was available and how it was presented in catalogues, which offer both a comprehensive listing of the goods being sold and (sometimes very full) descriptions of many items, allowing assessments to be made of their quality as well as type. I focus on domestic (that is household) textiles for three key reasons: first, they have been somewhat neglected as a category of second-hand goods (as opposed to clothing, which has received considerable attention); second, they were a varied group, comprising goods that were everyday and practical (sheets and blankets) as well as those that were more status oriented (bed hangings) or associated with enhanced physical comfort (carpets); third, they included goods that might be thought increasingly problematic when second-hand for reasons of hygiene (bedding) or changing fashion (curtains).

The discussion is organised under different categories of textiles – household linen, beds and bedding, and drapery and carpets – but running through the paper are three key questions: what household textiles were offered for sale and how did this change in terms of type and quality over the study period; how were different types of textiles described and valorised in the auction catalogues, and what can this tell us about the market for second-hand goods and the possible motivations of consumers who chose to buy used goods, recognising that the catalogues themselves do not ascribe motivation or tell us anything about who bought the goods being promoted?

### **Country house sales: promoting and selling lots**

Country house sales were promoted via notices placed in the local and sometimes the national press.<sup>22</sup> The wording of these advertisements was often reproduced, sometimes verbatim, on the covers of auction catalogues which themselves formed a mechanism for promoting the sales. These were made available at the auctioneer's offices and via local booksellers, inns and the like, allowing potential buyers to assess the nature of the goods on offer ahead of the sale itself. They

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<sup>21</sup> Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers'; Pennell, 'All but the kitchen sink'.

<sup>22</sup> Gemmett, 'Fonthill sale', 381-8; MacArthur and Stobart, 'Going for a song?.'



could then be examined over several days of viewing immediately before the auction, during which those with catalogues were allowed to access the house and wander through its rooms, seeing the various lots in situ and often en suite. The auction itself almost invariably took place in the house, the lots often being knocked down room by room – just as they appeared in the catalogue.

Auction catalogues thus offer a useful insight into both the promotion and organisation of the sale, as well as itemising the goods available. Reading the front covers, it is clear that the identity and fate of the previous owner was important in legitimising the sale and the goods on offer.<sup>23</sup> The name of the owner is noted in all but one case and the goods frequently lauded as genuine, elegant, genteel, valuable, useful and even modern – a language which echoes that noted by Coquery in the advertisements of Parisian furniture dealers.<sup>24</sup> This gives us some immediate clues about the motivations to which the auctioneers hoped to appeal. They were keen to assure buyers that the goods really were the effects of the house owner, had belonged in that property and were, in that sense, genuine and authentic. More broadly, they were bound into the cultural norms of gentility and thus portrayed as appropriate goods for genteel households or those with aspirations to such status. Assurances of modernity reflected an attempt to present them as retaining cultural currency, even if they were not at the height of fashion; playing on ideas of value and utility appealed to a sense of thriftiness that lay at the centre of the well-managed household, both genteel and middling.<sup>25</sup> Potential buyers could thus see themselves as canny and careful, able to identify culturally appropriate goods and secure them at a good price. William Beckford's goods undoubtedly carried 'noble' kudos, as might those of the Earl of Halifax, and the belongings of men like R.J. Tibbits, esq. (Geddington House) or Henry Green, esq. (Rolleston Hall) might have carried meanings and associations amongst local buyers, but it is less clear whether

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<sup>23</sup> MacArthur and Stobart, 'Going for a song?', 180-82.

<sup>24</sup> Coquery, 'Language of success', 86.

<sup>25</sup> Whittle and Griffiths, *Gender and Consumption* 26-48; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 127-60; Harvey, *Little Republic*, esp. 64-98.

people thought of themselves as acquiring part of another's genuine world, as Wall and Charpy argue.<sup>26</sup>

What is also apparent from the covers of the catalogues is that textiles were rarely the main attraction: only half of the sample included any mention of textiles and seven of these were before 1805. Just once were textiles the first set of goods to be mentioned, in the catalogue for the 1761 sale at Cottingham quoted at the start of this article.<sup>27</sup> More often, they were featured lower down the listings, in the mix with furniture, books, tableware and wine. The Cottingham catalogue was also unusual in naming a range of textiles on the cover; most only mentioned household linen. This fits with Pennell's argument that, whilst second-hand textiles had been an important part of the strategies of even quite wealthy consumers when it came to furnishing their homes – and especially their beds – this importance slipped through the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> However, it would be a mistake to assume from their absence from the covers of auction catalogues that domestic textiles were also missing from the sales themselves. If we open up the catalogues and read through the lots on offer, it quickly becomes apparent that a large quantity and range of textiles were available, especially in the later decades of the eighteenth century. This pushes any decline in the importance of the country house sale as a source of textiles into the opening years of the nineteenth century at the earliest.

In all, there were 5518 items and 149 different types of textiles offered for sale (Tables 1 and 2), ranging from napkins and knife cloths to beds and Brussels carpets. Unsurprisingly, linens were most numerous, despite the fact that they appeared in only ten of the sales, averaging 271 items per sale; blankets and quilts were the next most common, followed by carpets and curtains, but even beds were widely available, with an average of over 13 per sale. Quantities decreased over time, from an average of 324 items per sale before 1805 to just 218 after 1815, with carpets being the only category of textile goods that were more numerous in the second part of the study

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<sup>26</sup> Wall, 'English auction', 14-15; Charpy, 'Auction house', 219.

<sup>27</sup> M0005644NL/2 Cottingham, 1761, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Pennell, 'Making the bed', 35-41. Domestic textiles are not mentioned amongst the goods traded second-hand by Parisian upholsterers – see Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion', 73-4.

period. However, the range remained steady at 8-9 categories of textiles per sale, suggesting that country houses remained an important source of a wide variety of domestic textiles well into the nineteenth century. Moreover, like their metropolitan counterparts, these sales afforded the opportunity to acquire both everyday goods and a considerable variety of high quality items.<sup>29</sup> Writing ahead of the sale at William Beckford's Fonthill estate in 1801, *The Times* assumed that the items on offer would be 'old-fashioned and worn-out articles'; but the correspondent at the auction itself was struck by the quality of goods being sold: 'there never was ... a collection of finer or more superb furniture, in proportion to its quantity'.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the Northamptonshire sales were not in the same league, there were still some remarkable pieces, including: 'two sets of beautiful striped and flowered chintz pattern cotton festoon window curtains, 13 feet long, 3 breadths each, lined with calico and fringed, to correspond with the bed' at Stamford Hall (1792) and a 6 foot carved mahogany bedstead, 'with beautiful modern needlework furniture, lined throughout, silk fringe and full drapery, with black and gilt cornice poles' at Welton Place (1830).<sup>31</sup> Such goods might attract high status buyers. Back at Fonthill, *The Times* had been scathing, writing that: 'the principal competition is expected among the Farmers', whereas the sale accounts list amongst the buyers numerous gentlemen and aristocrats, including the Earl of Ilchester and the Duke of Somerset.<sup>32</sup> Country house auctions thus appealed to a wide range of buyers and second-hand goods did not necessarily descend down the social ladder.

[Tables 1 and 2 near here]

### **Household linen: practicality and respectability**

Household linen falls into two broad categories – for the table and for beds. Both were important to a well-furnished home, serving practical functions linked to comfort, sociability and hygiene,

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<sup>29</sup> Charpy, 'Auction house'; Wall, 'English auctions'.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Gemmett, 'Fonthill Sale', 383

<sup>31</sup> NCL, M0005646NL/11, Stamford Hall, 1792, 5; M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Gemmett, 'Fonthill sale', 383-4.

and signalling status through displays of plentiful and clean linen.<sup>33</sup> In quantitative terms, only the availability of napkins and pillowcases held up over time: tablecloths, sheets and especially towels were found in much smaller numbers after 1815 than had been the case earlier (Table 1). Even so, the quantities available at certain auctions remained impressive. The 1823 sale of Henry Fryer's belongings from Stamford Baron included 56 tablecloths, 142 napkins, 60 sheets, 42 pillowcases, and 76 towels and kitchen cloths; selling them all took up much of the fourth day of the auction.<sup>34</sup> Choose the right sale, then, and the late Georgian householder could still acquire an impressive array of linen second-hand. This suggests a continuation of the practices noted by Nenadic in her analysis of auctions in late eighteenth-century Glasgow where the up-and-coming merchant class happily acquiring a variety of goods, including household linen. The attraction of these goods was their usefulness in facilitating rituals of hospitality centred on the table – a key part of middling and genteel sociability at this time.<sup>35</sup> They were 'capturing value' by acquiring good quality and useful goods at a lower price than they would pay for new items, but they were also drawing on and reinforcing the cultural value of table linen for the middle ranks. The upshot for individual householders was that they might end up owning a variety of linen acquired from many different places and perhaps carrying the marks of many different earlier owners. Indeed, Nenadic notes just this in the case of William Crawford, a wealthy Glasgow merchant, whose large store of linen was all carefully marked with initials, but none with his own or those of his wife.<sup>36</sup>

Part of what made country house sales so attractive to such people was the range of linen available. Across the eleven auctions where it was being sold, there were 13 different types and qualities of tablecloth, many with napkins en suite; 10 sorts of sheets and 6 of pillowcases, and 14 varieties of towels, cloths and dusters (Table 2). To flesh this out a little, the catalogue for the auction of Sir Thomas Cave's goods from Stanford Hall in 1792 lists tablecloths in fine damask and diaper, plus damask breakfast cloths and servants' tablecloths. There were also napkins in fine

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<sup>33</sup> On the importance of clean linen, see Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*; Lemire, 'Indian textiles', 18-20.

<sup>34</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/9, Stamford Baron, 1823, 57-62

<sup>35</sup> Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers'; Collins, 'Matters material and luxurious', 114.

<sup>36</sup> Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers', 131.

damask, damask, and diaper, and a variety of doylies.<sup>37</sup> A similar range of table linen was listed amongst the property of the Earl of Halifax, auctioned in 1772; but here a note against some of the damask tablecloths that they were 'almost new' heightened the attraction of these items by hinting at their currency and lack of wear.<sup>38</sup> Buyers could thus acquire table linen for a wide variety of purposes, from the everyday to impressive cloths brought out when entertaining guests – as Elizabeth Shackleton did with her 'handsome new damask tablecloth which looks most beautiful'.<sup>39</sup> Having a range of table cloths and napkins was important in making the right statement through qualitative distinctions, but it also helped to ensure that clean linen was always available – a very material consideration when dirty linen was a signal of a poorly managed household and a slur on the moral standing of the housewife.<sup>40</sup> The availability of such variety and choice via country house sales meant that at some of this demand could be readily met via second-hand goods.

Much the same could be argued for sheets and pillowcases, which were also available in a range of different qualities, from diaper through Irish and huckabuck to Russian and even homespun. A plentiful supply, perhaps augmented by second-hand purchases and often carefully marked with marks to indicate the room for which they were intended, again signalled good household management, as Vickery's analysis of Lancashire families makes clear.<sup>41</sup> The position with towels and cloths was made more complex because of the wide variety of uses ascribed to them. At the Wollaston Hall sale in 1805, for instance, there were huckabuck, common, round and hand towels, but also knife, kitchen and glass cloths.<sup>42</sup> The former would have been used by family members and guests as part of the process of cleaning the body, perhaps during dining, but increasingly in dressing rooms as part of the toilette. The latter were for servants to dry or clean tableware, again

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<sup>37</sup> NCL, M0005646NL/11, Stanford Hall, 1792, 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods' 285.

<sup>40</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 148. See also Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 189-222.

<sup>41</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 150-51. See also Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers'.

<sup>42</sup> NCL, MM0005644NL/5, Wollaston Hall, 1805.

ensuring the presentation of clean tableware as a symbol of a respectable and orderly household.<sup>43</sup>

Buying table and bed linen at country house auctions was thus linked to motives other than financial necessity. Respectable householders were no doubt attracted by the prospect of securing a bargain, but also by the variety and choice available. In addition, they may have been interested in marking distinction through the purchase of particularly fine linen that might act as a status symbol. Qualitative descriptions added to the listings of table and bed linen were comparatively brief and generally centred on distinguishing some pieces as particularly fine. Quality and size came together in some descriptions, as at Wollaston Hall where we see a '*very fine* large damask table cloth, 4¼ yards long & 3 yards wide, and a lay-over', followed by another the same and a further twelve that were slightly smaller.<sup>44</sup> These were impressive pieces – objects of desire that would add distinction to the table of the new owner, rather than everyday items snapped up because they were a bargain. They were exceptional both in their quality and in the way that they would stand out in all but the wealthiest homes. They were the equivalent of Elizabeth Shackleton's handsome damask tablecloth: objects of pride but also affection and sentiment. After using her cloth for the first time, Elizabeth noted in her diary: 'Good luck to it, hope it will do well'.<sup>45</sup>

Most household linen could be slotted in alongside existing pieces, even if there were slight differences in size or fabric. The process of integration was assisted by the relative ease with which linen could be cleaned, removing any physical traces of previous use and previous ownership – always a concern with second-hand goods.<sup>46</sup> Laundering was an important consideration in selecting textiles, as Lemire has demonstrated in the context of the growing

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, 130-38; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 149.

<sup>44</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/5, Wollaston Hall, 24. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods' 285.

<sup>46</sup> See Jones, 'Souvenirs of people'.

demand for Indian textiles,<sup>47</sup> and second-hand goods were far less problematic if they could be washed. What of those that were less amenable to such processes of purification?

### **Beds and bedding: a problematic purchase?**

In many ways, beds and bedding were also readily integrated into existing assemblages of goods as the constituent parts of a well-made bed in a prosperous house were fairly standardised across the study period: a mattress, bed, pillows and bolster, plus blankets and a quilt or counterpane.<sup>48</sup> That they might be acquired second-hand is understandable given the considerable cost of the assemblage of bed, bedstead and hangings.<sup>49</sup> However, there was a growing distrust of used beds and bedding, most frequently expressed in terms of cleanliness and anxieties about infestations of insects. Pennell argues that this was already apparent in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, being heightened by the publication of John Southall's *Treatise on Bugs* in 1730.<sup>50</sup> As they could not readily be washed, beds, bedding and bedsteads were particularly suspect as potential carriers of vermin, a concern that prompted the emergence of a range of patent and homemade concoctions to kill the offending insects. Yet Pennell also notes that demand for used bedding and beds remained buoyant well beyond this date, good quality and well-maintained articles retaining their value in the second-hand market. Something of this tension is captured by Elizabeth Dryden, a widowed landowner living at Canons Ashby in Northamptonshire, when she was contemplating a move to London in 1816. She wrote to her sister-in-law that 'I have much fear of the bugs ... [and] ... must be at the expense I fear of a new bed as all old furniture in London is dangerous'.<sup>51</sup> It is telling that second-hand was something that she would contemplate, if then reject, and that the attraction was the relative cost of new and used.

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<sup>47</sup> Lemire, 'An education in comfort', 13-29.

<sup>48</sup> Pennell, 'Making the bed', 31-33

<sup>49</sup> Riello, 'Fabricating the domestic', 49-50.

<sup>50</sup> Pennell, 'Making the bed', 39-40. See also Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 41-5.

<sup>51</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, D(CA)/361, Letter, 18 August 1816.

The auction catalogues indicate that the supply of, and by implication the market for, used beds and bedding fell notably from the late eighteenth century. A total of 191 sets of beds, pillows and bolsters were offered at the eleven sales before 1805; just 94 were listed in the ten sales after 1815. For blankets, the figures were 507 and 297 respectively. It appears, then, that others may have shared the concerns expressed by Elizabeth Dryden, eroding the demand for second-hand bedding. That said, the earlier figures are inflated by the huge quantities of beds and bedding being sold from the estate of the Earl of Halifax (some 449 items in all – see Table 1) and there were still significant amounts available at the Welton Place sale in 1830.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, demand did not dry up completely, maybe because beds from known and local sources, and accessed through an auctioneer with a reputation to maintain and perhaps therefore seen as trustworthy, might have been less worrying than those from London.<sup>53</sup>

Turning from quantity to quality, there is evidence of qualitative distinctions within a fairly constant assemblage of goods. Aside from the bedstead (not considered here), the fundamental element was the bed itself. With the exception of a handful of straw-filled beds sold from Pychley Hall in 1816,<sup>54</sup> feathers were the standard in attics and servants' rooms as well as the family and guest bedchambers – a standard of provision seen by Crowley as an indication of growing comfort in English homes.<sup>55</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to view all feather beds as uniform in their socio-cultural or economic value. The best rooms were often differentiated by the provision of goose feather beds or by those described as 'fine' or 'seasoned', semantic and material distinctions which marked the status of the rooms and their occupants. Moreover, comfort, status and cost were often determined by the weight of the bed, a point made explicit in the catalogue for the sale at Hazlebeach, wherein a note against each bed informed buyers that they were to be sold 'per lb'.<sup>56</sup> The significance of this is twofold. First, it helps to explain the difference in

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<sup>52</sup> NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, 33-7; M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, 32-4.

<sup>53</sup> See de Munck and Lyna, 'Locating and dislocating value', 4.

<sup>54</sup> NCL, M000564NL/15, Pychley Hall, 1816, *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> NCL, M0005647NL/7, Hazlebeach, 1802, 5.



estimated price (and economic value) marked by the auctioneer against each bed in the 1761 Cottingham sale catalogue.<sup>57</sup> Those in the garrets were expected to fetch between £1 and £1 2s. 6d., whereas those in the main chambers had estimates ranging from £1 14s. to £2 10s. Second, selling by weight hints at the likely fate of many beds once they were purchased and taken home; rather than being used in their current form, they would be cut open and the feathers used to stuff existing or new beds. This was common practice within households, Mary Leigh being charged £1 15s. by the upholsterers Bradshaw and Smith for ‘ripping the porters bed & bolster & taking out all the feather, well waxing the tick, driving & dressing the old feathers & putting 12lb best season’d feathers in addition, sewing up the tick’.<sup>58</sup> Cleaning the feathers in this way may have helped to alleviate some of the concerns about infestation and cleanliness.

Bedding was less amenable to this kind of repurposing, but was readily incorporated into the purchaser’s home, either as individual items or in the sets in which it was invariably sold: three blankets, plus a quilt, coverlet or counterpane. Most blankets were described in simple terms, with little to distinguish one from another and relatively few superlatives. Some were ‘large’ or described in terms of the number of quarters (12 being most common); rather more than 10 per cent were lauded as ‘fine’. More occasionally, the catalogues refer specifically to Witney blankets – a rare example of a ‘proto-brand’ which communicated material qualities through a place-name.<sup>59</sup> They had a reputation for being particularly soft and had an excellent whiteness, and would presumably have been particularly attractive to buyers at these auctions; the distinctive blue or red stripes signifying their dimensions also served as a kind of branding.<sup>60</sup> Like sheets, blankets were utilitarian items: a necessary part of any comfortable night’s sleep. To judge from the Cottingham catalogue, their price varied comparatively in little in relation to their location in the

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<sup>57</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/2, Cottingham, 1761, *passim*. These prices are printed in the catalogue. Pennell notes that, at a 1753 house sale in London, the prices realized for beds and bedding were 10-50 percent higher than these estimated prices – see Pennell, ‘Making the bed’, 39. Whilst not uncommon practice, this is the only catalogue in the sample which marks prices in this way.

<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare Central Library and Archives, DR18/5/6023a.

<sup>59</sup> See Richardson, ‘Brand names’.

<sup>60</sup> Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures*, 35.

house and, at just 2-3s., it was very modest. Direct comparisons are difficult, but only five years later Edward Leigh, was charged £1 apiece for fine large blankets and 8s. for more workaday under-blankets for his refurbished bedchambers at Stoneleigh Abbey. Even with a difference in size and quality, it is clear that buying blankets second hand made them much cheaper – a cost saving which must have underpinned many purchases as an effective way of capturing value.<sup>61</sup>

With quilts, coverlets and counterpanes, qualitative differences were more important in determining price and perhaps also in rendering them attractive to potential buyers. There were, of course, physical differences between these items: quilts had a filling (increasingly of cotton) between two outer layers, whereas counterpanes and coverlets were often woven in squares and sometimes embroidered.<sup>62</sup> As the uppermost covering on the bed, they were visible in a way that sheets and blankets were not, making their physical appearance far more important. This is reflected in the auction catalogues, which noted the material composition of around one-third of bedcovers, thus highlighting to potential buyers their cultural value alongside their utility as another layer of insulation on the bed. There were bedcovers made from silk, damask, dimity, camblet, chintz, printed and plain cotton, checks and stripes; some were adorned with needlework. Material differences helped to distinguish these items as markers of taste and status, a function which was underpinned by their price. Vickery notes that cotton counterpanes were found in even cheap furnished lodgings by the 1790s,<sup>63</sup> but different materials and finishes made for very different prices and cultural meanings. At Cottingham, the auctioneer suggested that a plain white quilt might fetch 8-10s. – an impressive amount compared with a blanket and even an ordinary feather bed, but easily overshadowed by the £2 and £2 2s. put against a silk and a needlework counterpane.<sup>64</sup> Like the crimson silk and crimson damask counterpanes sold off from the Earl of Halifax's estate a decade later, these were not simply useful items; they were desirable

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<sup>61</sup> SCLA, DR18/3/47/52/15 bill from Thomas Burnett, 1765. Similar cost savings were apparent with beds: Leigh paid a minimum of £6 14s. for a feather bed, bolster and two pillows – four times the cost of the most expensive bed in the Cottingham sale.

<sup>62</sup> Edwards, *Furnishing Textiles*, 60-61, 173-4.

<sup>63</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 214.

<sup>64</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/2, Cottingham, 1761, 6.

objects that would add a layer of luxury to the purchaser's bed. Unsurprisingly, then, these items were valorised through the deployment of adjectives that emphasised their aesthetics qualities and linked them to familiar tropes of taste and status, much as Coquery notes of Parisian upholsterers.<sup>65</sup> For instance, we see a 'neat' needlework counterpane at Stanford Hall (1792); a 'beautiful' Marseilles quilt at Rolleston Hall (1801), and a 'handsome' 12-quarter white cotton counterpane at Geddington Hall (1823). These were words redolent with meaning for eighteenth-century householders. As Vickery argues, they 'embodied the social distinctions of provincial gentility', communicating ideas of good taste rather than ostentatious grandeur, but lifting both the goods and their prospective owners above mere respectability.<sup>66</sup> Consciously or not, then, auctioneers were tapping into broader cultural norms to make these used goods more appealing. These auction catalogues, of course, were more than simple listings of goods to be sold; they promulgated the cultural values that imbued goods with meaning as well as promoting the cultural value of the goods themselves. In praising a needlework counterpane as 'neat', for instance, the auctioneer no doubt sought to make it more desirable to buyers, but also encouraged those buyers to value neatness in such products. These same ideas came out more strongly in the final category of textiles I wish to consider: bed hangings, curtains and carpets.

### **Curtains and carpets: home comforts or status symbols?**

All household textiles served a variety of functions, both practical and symbolic. One key benefit that they brought was to help make the country house more comfortable – an aspiration that grew in importance through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. Whilst we might contest the timing and emphasis which Crowley outlines, there is no doubt that people took increasing trouble to make their homes physically comfortable and sociable places – an important

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<sup>65</sup> Coquery, 'Language of success', 86; Coquery, 'Fashion, business, diffusion', 73.

<sup>66</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 161. See also Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 180-82.

part of the growing material richness of the home.<sup>67</sup> Alongside technological developments like stoves and lamps, furnishing textiles were deployed in a variety of ways that enhanced comfort: upholstered seats were more accommodating; carpets offered some measure of insulation on a cold floor (especially important in bedchambers), and curtains reduced drafts and offered some privacy – an extension to the room of earlier imperatives for the bed with its hangings. At the same time, of course, these textiles also expressed the taste and wealth of their owner. The state bed had long been a key focus for expressing aristocratic wealth and power through the opulence of fine and luxurious fabrics; window curtains and carpets offered further opportunities for such display.<sup>68</sup> The appearance of these items in the sale catalogues thus raises a number of important questions about how they were conceived as practical objects or symbols of taste, and what this tell us about the possible motivations for acquiring such things second hand.

In total, there were 265 sets of bed hangings, 320 pairs of window curtains and 333 carpets and rugs offered for sale across the 21 auctions (Table 1). The amount of drapery being offered for sale declined sharply in the nineteenth century, roughly halving for both bed hangings and curtains. This mirrors the decline in beds and may, as Riello argues, have been prompted by similar concerns for hygiene, particularly as beds, hangings and window curtains were often conceived and supplied en suite for bedchambers.<sup>69</sup> The catalogues reflect this process, grouping on the page the assemblage of bed, bedding, curtains and furniture that comprised a comfortable bedchamber. However, as the ensemble was usually split into different lots and sold separately, it is by no means certain that the same motivations or reservations were in the minds of buyers when it came to purchasing beds, blankets, hangings and curtains. In the absence of sale accounts, we do not know whether buyers acquired individual lots or the whole set.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, esp. 142-9. See also DeJean, *Age of Comfort*, 102-30, 156-8; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 207-30.

<sup>68</sup> DeJean, *Age of Comfort*, 165-77; Riello, 'Fabricating the domestic'.

<sup>69</sup> Riello, 'Fabricating the domestic', 63; Stobart and Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, 218-23.

<sup>70</sup> For examples of purchasing behaviour, see Gemmett, 'Fonthill sale'; Bristol, 'A tale of two sales', 9-24.

As with other kinds of textiles, country house sales offered an impressive variety of drapery, especially in the eighteenth century: bed hangings appear in a total of 20 different types of cloth and window curtains in fourteen, each with dozens of variants in terms of colour and pattern. Even in a single auction, the choice available could be impressive. At Brixworth Hall, for example, the catalogue for the 1797 sale lists bed hangings in green check, green morine, needlework, Manchester, white calico, green damask, crimson check, crimson morine, white morine, corded dimity, calico, and red and white cotton; there were curtains in green morine, calico, green damask, striped cotton, white morine, corded dimity and chintz – several of which appear both as hanging and festoon.<sup>71</sup> Variety declined over time, in part reflecting the overall decline in the quantity of drapery appearing in the auctions, although this was more manifest in terms of fabric type than colour and pattern. Morine, sometimes referred to as stuff,<sup>72</sup> became increasingly common, displacing other woollen cloths such as cheney, harrateen and serge. More striking, though, was the increasing use of chintz, which became widespread in both bedchambers and living rooms at the expense of damask and woollens (Table 3). Here, the drapery available from auctions undoubtedly followed the prevailing taste both for patterns and for textiles that could be kept clean and free from vermin.<sup>73</sup> They fitted with Vickery's assessment of provincial genteel taste for wallpapers that were 'neat and not too showy',<sup>74</sup> allowing such objects to slot into non-elite domestic arrangements in a way that might have been more problematic with an earlier generation of silks and damasks.

[Table 3 near here]

Curtain would have added to the comfort as well as the aesthetics of the home, but it is with carpets that this imperative becomes more apparent. Hearth-rugs and bedside carpets, rarely listed in catalogues before 1800, became commonplace thereafter – part of the general rise in number of carpets listed in the auctions catalogues (Table 1). Bedside carpets were often sold in

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<sup>71</sup> NCL, M0005646NL/15, Brixworth Hall, 1797, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *Furnishing Textiles*, 203.

<sup>73</sup> Lemire, 'Indian Textiles', 18-20; Edwards, *Furnishing Textiles*; Riello, 'Fabricating the domestic', 63.

<sup>74</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 166-83.

pairs, set either side of the bed, whilst hearth rugs would have protected larger carpets against sparks from the fire. Both were integral to making rooms more comfortable, but it is the growing number of carpets in passageways and stairs that did most to add to the overall comfort of domestic life by taking some of the chill from what were often described as cold and draughty spaces.<sup>75</sup> As with curtains, their availability at auctions signals both their presence within the homes of the gentry and their availability to others. Read in this way, a carpet for the stairs or the bedside might be seen as a utilitarian item, purchased at auction because it offered good value for money; but carpets were also hugely important in shaping the aesthetics of the room. The catalogues make no mention of colours or patterns, but the style and character was communicated through place names: Turkey, Wilton, Scotch, Kidderminster and Brussels. It is telling, then, that Scotch and Wilton carpets dominated before 1815, but disappeared thereafter, whereas the opposite was true of Kidderminster and Brussels carpets. With Scotch and Kidderminster, this was a shift in name rather than type, both being thinner ingrain carpets which were less expensive; the move from Wilton to Brussels was more significant because the former had a thicker velvet pile whilst the latter had a smooth looped pile.<sup>76</sup> Velvet cut-pile carpets were considered more luxurious, but those with a close pile had a better defined pattern, more in keeping with fashionable taste in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The appeal to genteel taste in both carpets and curtains is apparent in the language used to describe these goods. They were elegant, neat, genteel, beautiful and above all handsome – an adjective deployed in nearly one-third of the catalogues to describe these goods. As with quilts and counterpanes, then, auctioneers were active in blending the goods they were selling into the cultural norms of gentility. As one auctioneer put it in an advertisement placed in the local press, these were not the ‘Scraps or Scrapings of Time’ but pieces in which ‘Beauty and Art are so happily blended ... that, it is hoped, Criticism will lose her Sting on the Day of Viewing and give an assenting Nod on the Day of Sale’.<sup>77</sup> Linked to this, we also see attempts to portray particular

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<sup>75</sup> Fowler and Cornforth, *English Decoration*, 225-6.

<sup>76</sup> Edwards, *Furnishing Textiles*, 34-5, 117-18, 188, 240.

<sup>77</sup> *Northampton Mercury*, 3 January 1780

pieces of drapery as genuine and modern: chintz curtains sold from the drawing room at Thorp Malsor (1815) were described as being of a 'real Indian pattern' whilst a set at Welton Place (1830) were in 'beautiful modern needlework'.<sup>78</sup> Conversely, there is nothing to suggest that the auctioneers sought to portray these textiles as useful or valuable – other adjectives deployed in newspaper advertisements from the time. Both utility and economic value are apparently taken as read, something which is underscored by the price difference between new and used, which appears to have been greater here than was the case with bedding. Whereas Edward Leigh was charged £5 10s. 11d. for a pair of green morine window curtains and £17 1s. 9d. for a four-post wainscot bedstead with green morine furniture, the auctioneer organising the Cottingham sale estimated that four large morine curtains would fetch £2 2s. and a four-post bedstead with green damask furniture £2 15s.<sup>79</sup> Of course, we do not know about the relative quality of the textiles or the condition of the drapery at Cottingham, but, with prices well under half and perhaps as little one-sixth, second-hand again emerges as offering the careful householder real bargains.

We should be wary, though, of assuming that buyers were simply weighing considerations of cost against those of taste and wear-and-tear. The lengthy and persuasive descriptions of window curtains which some auctioneers included in their catalogues suggests that they were trying to promote these as desirable objects which would add lustre to the purchaser's home. James Denew, who organised the 1823 sale at Geddington House, waxed lyrical, describing 'a suite of elegant lofty French curtains for two windows, lined with yellow, full drapery valens, trimmed with silk fringes and lace' and 'a very elegant suite of Parlour Curtains for 2 lofty French windows, made of fine dove coloured morine, bordered with brown silk velvet, full drapery valens, trimmed with a rich deep fringe, displayed on black and gold cornices'.<sup>80</sup> Even if we strip away the rhetoric, these were undoubtedly impressive objects, and of course the rhetoric is important: Denew clearly sought to portray these and many other things in the sale as positional goods with the

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<sup>78</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/14, Thorp Malsor, 1815, 19; M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, 37.

<sup>79</sup> SCLA, DR18/3/47/52/15.

<sup>80</sup> NCL, M0005644NL/8, Geddington 1823, 14.

power to bolster or enhance social status. As Coquery argues for Parisian upholsterers, the material qualities of the objects are linked adjectivally to aesthetics and broader cultural values.<sup>81</sup>

Two things are important here for our understanding of second-hand consumption. The first is that these were not goods that would fit into just any house. Although the state bed was acquired for the Theatre Royal in Bath, most items at Fonthill were bought according to the status of the buyer and their desire either to augment their houses with choice items or pick up handsome but useful furniture things. Mr Bracher, who owned land in the neighbouring parish, bought an oval mahogany dining table, whereas the Earl of Ilchester and the Duke of Somerset both acquired four-post carved mahogany bedsteads with japanned cornices and chintz furniture at a cost of £27 6s. and £32 11s. respectively.<sup>82</sup> Quite apart from their grandiose appearance, the curtains at Geddington House were simply too large to make them practical for smaller rooms – curtains with a 12 or 14 feet drop, carpets measuring over 40 square yards and beds standing 12 feet tall required big rooms. Of course, all might be cut into small pieces or modified to fit other spaces, but even so they needed to fit into the existing décor if they were to be integrated properly into the new domestic setting.<sup>83</sup> This links to the second point, that these items were powerful social statements – even second hand they could communicate wealth and status. This is apparent from the list of titled and genteel buyers at the Fonthill sale, but also from the intrinsic character of the drapery and carpets, as well as the books, pier glasses and furniture available in the Northamptonshire auctions. None of these things would have been bought second hand from financial necessity or for their economic value alone – they were luxuries and were written into the catalogues as such. In the absence of information about purchasers, it is impossible to be certain, but it seems most likely that what motivated them was a desire to acquire items that were commensurate with or enhanced their homes. Whether the identity of the previous owner made them more attractive in this sense is possible, but less certain: difference was marked by status symbols rather than allusions to another's world.

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<sup>81</sup> Coquery, 'Language of success', 86. See also Jeggle, 'Labeling with numbers', 33.

<sup>82</sup> Gemmet, 'Fonthill sale', 383-4.

<sup>83</sup> See McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, 118-29.



## Conclusion

Country house sales offered a wide range of goods through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Whilst they rarely formed comprehensive clearances of the entire moveable estate, these auctions offered much more than the ‘scraps and scrapings of time’ – things that might be bought from financial necessity. All the sales included in this analysis released into circulation things that were worth owning and which could augment the existing material culture of respectable and genteel homes – things like damask tablecloths, Brussels carpets and chintz counterpanes. In part, this reflected the slower cycle of change in household goods in comparison with clothing: they could retain both cultural currency and economic value much longer. Old furniture was sometimes bought because it offered authenticity to the bourgeois home or formed part of collectible types;<sup>84</sup> but domestic textiles did not readily align with such priorities, in part because of their semi-durable nature – they wore out rather than obtaining an attractive patina. This goes some way to explaining the declining quantity of textiles sold at the Northamptonshire sales, as does the growing concern about cleanliness and infestation. That said, we should not overstate this decline: a variety of domestic textiles remained a remained significant in all the Northamptonshire sales in the 1810s-1830s and the language used to describe these goods consistently emphasised their alignment with the norms of gentility. In identifying bed hangings, counterpanes and carpets as neat, handsome or elegant the auctioneers highlighted their aesthetic qualities in a way that chimed with the sensibilities of those who were or aspired to be genteel. More detailed descriptions of the workmanship involved (for example, curtains being lined and fringed), or assertions that sheets or tablecloths were fine, served to underline the material qualities and durability of these objects. This links to Pennell’s argument that clean and well-maintained textiles retained a value for middling sort householders exercising thrift and looking to secure a bargain.<sup>85</sup> Both the language and the goods themselves blended a concern with

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<sup>84</sup> Charpey, ‘Auction house’; Westgarth, *Antique and Curiosity Dealer*.

<sup>85</sup> Pennell, ‘Making the bed’.

economic and cultural value; these were things worth buying because of their relative price, their symbolism and, indeed, their utility – a combination perhaps seen most clearly in household linen. Purchased second-hand, I would argue that domestic textiles were less about authenticity and distinction (as Charpy argues for old furniture and Gregson and Crewe assert for present-day buyers of retro clothing), and more about belonging. They helped to mark membership of a broadly defined set of genteel and respectable households, both in terms of the quantity and variety of domestic textiles that it should contain and their material and aesthetic qualities.

Country house auctions played a particular and important role in this process. As commercial institutions they were a key mechanism through which a wide range of household goods – from the magnificent to the mundane – were brought back into circulation, feeding consumer demand amongst a middling sort that, in contrast with the trade in used clothing, remained firmly engaged with the second-hand market.<sup>86</sup> Auction catalogues were a key source of consumer knowledge. They smoothed information asymmetries by advertising the range of goods available and fostered trust through the identity and standing of the previous owner, the reputation of the auctioneer and the location of the sale.<sup>87</sup> This allowed auction lots to escape from some of the anxieties that surrounded used goods, especially in terms of their authenticity. In asserting the owner's name and holding the sale in the house, the risk of buying shoddy newly made goods dressed as old was minimised. In their use of language auction catalogues also spread knowledge about the value systems which framed the demand for these goods. *The Times* might have struck a moralising tone in its reflections on the 1801 Fonthill sale, arguing that luxury and fashion were 'false taste and superfluous gaiety' spread through society through events such as public auctions.<sup>88</sup> However, the Northamptonshire auctions brought taste and material objects firmly into the realm of respectable gentility: second-hand domestic textiles were solid and virtuous, just like the people who had and would own them.

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<sup>86</sup> See Lemire, 'Secondhand clothing trade', 153-4.

<sup>87</sup> De Munck and Lyna, 'Locating and dislocating value', 4; MacArthur and Stobart, 'Going for a song', 177-82.

<sup>88</sup> Gemmett, 'Fonthill sale', 388.

## **Glossory**

(based on Edward, *Encyclopedia of Furnishing Textiles*)

Calico – rather coarse and lightweight cotton, sometimes printed; often used as a generic term for all Indian cottons, although later manufactured in Europe

Camblet – plain-weave woollen, traditionally with a watered pattern

Cheney – worsted, often with bold colours and embossed, watered or striped pattern; similar to harrateen and morine

Chintz – painted or stained cotton, originally from India but increasingly manufactured in Europe

Damask – woollen or woollen-silk mix, woven with an elaborate figured design, sometimes in contrasting colours

Diaper – linen, woven on the damask principle

Dimity – plain-weaver cotton and linen mix with a distinctive rib effect

Doily – small ornamental linen mat used at dessert

Harrateen – worsted, finished by watering and stamping, often in imitation of damask; similar to harrateen and morine

Huckabuck – stout linen with rough or bumpy surface

Morine – strong woollen with stamped or watered pattern in imitation of camblet

Russian – heavyweight, coarse linen

Serge – worsted and woollen mix with distinctive diagonal rib

Stuff – generic term of worsted cloth with a nap or pile (including camblets, harrateens and morines)

Tabby – silk with watered or plain finish

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